

THE SATURDAY  
EVENING  
**POST**

FOUNDED IN  
1728 BY

*Benjamin Franklin*



Matt Cvetic leaving the office building in Pittsburgh where the headquarters of the Western Pennsylvania Communist Party was located. His evidence splintered the Reds.

# I POSED AS A COMMUNIST FOR THE FBI

By **MATT CVETIC**  
as told to **PETE MARTIN**

For nine agonizing years Matt Cvetic listened in on Communist Party secrets. His family—with anger and shame—thought him a traitor. They didn't know he was making regular reports to the FBI. Here is his own exciting story of the tense life of an undercover informant.

## PART ONE

**F**OR nine years, ending last February, I worked as an undercover man for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I was one of a number of ordinary citizens picked to infiltrate the Communist Party of the United States and to all outward appearances act as if I were a convinced communist. For the last seven years of my nine-year service, I was a member of the party itself, and quite active in it.

It was a tough assignment and I'm glad now that it's over. I'm on speaking terms again with my brothers and sisters, who naturally looked upon me as a black sheep. I wish that my mother could have lived to see me cleared, but she didn't. Last year she died thinking I was a traitor to my country, and I couldn't run the risk of telling her I wasn't. I was luckier with my dad. He didn't die until the last of May of this year, several months after the facts as to what I'd been doing for all those years became public knowledge.

My acting must have been satisfactory. At one time I belonged to twenty-three communist-front organizations. During the whole period of my undercover work the total must have run to seventy-five. I attended about 2000 communist-front-organization and Communist Party meetings. Because I have Slavic-American blood in my veins, the leaders of the Communist Party in the United States thought I'd be useful working with the Slavs in and around Pittsburgh. For this reason, one of the jobs I held was that of secretary of the American-Slovene Communist Bureau.

I was a member of the party's organizational, educational and nationality committees. I was also head of the Communist Party finance committee for Western Pennsylvania. That meant that many of the comrades in that end of the state paid their dues and contributions to me.

During those seven years the reports I made to the FBI totaled 20,000 typewritten pages. In addition, I supplied it with 30,000 pages of exhibits, letters, party propaganda pamphlets and other publications. I gave the FBI the names of nearly 1000 Communist Party members. Most of them lived in Western Pennsylvania. But I reported the names of communists from Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Washington and other cities too.

In February and March of this year I appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. With me I took ninety-three pounds of Communist Party bank statements, check stubs, minute books of meetings, radio scripts, letters, credentials and accounting statements. I gave the committee the names of 292 communists. Typical examples were the

HARRY SALTZMAN





Stalinist meetings were held on the second floor of the building at 943 Liberty Avenue. The communists didn't know that the FBI had wired the place for sound. All their discussions were recorded.

names of two comrades who were among the leaders of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. The real function of this committee is to raise money to fight deportation proceedings against foreign-born communists.

It is this group that raised money to defend Gerhardt Eisler, who was wrongly described as the top Russian operative in the United States before his flight to Europe. The truth is that a year or two before he skipped the country his usefulness to the party had been impaired through his failure to work secretly, and Sam Milgrim, an official of the International Workers Order, was really Eisler's boss in communist circles in this country. Right now the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born is raising money to defend the more than 200 Communist Party conspirators that the United States Government is trying to deport as undesirable aliens.

I could have given the Committee on Un-American Activities the names of many more communists. I didn't, because it would have meant including borderline people about whom I had a doubt as to whether they were merely muddled thinkers or had worked deliberately with the American Politburo. In my testimony before the committee, I confined myself to matters about which I had knowledge either from my own personal experience or from documentary evidence.

The Pittsburgh papers reported that the facts I'd discovered as an undercover man "splintered Pittsburgh's communist organization." Among those I smoked out were a woman who was trying to change a Mothers' Guild into a leftist front, and a county

employee and a United Steel Worker crane man, who were both suspended by their unions. A union official was defeated for re-election and a top organizer in the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union was given the choice of denying that he was a communist or of resigning. He resigned. Following my testimony, a high-school teacher was fired by the Pittsburgh Board of Education, and the man I identified as the secretary of the Professional Branch of the Communist Party was not only removed from his position with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra but was booted out of the Federation of Musicians.

One result of my speaking out was that the Pittsburgh School Board refused the communists further permission to hold their rallies and meetings in the city's school buildings. Up to that time they had used that city's schools whenever they felt like it.

Naturally, these things weren't accomplished without a lot of communist venom being spat in my direction. Plenty of it was squirted at me by a communist leader who calls himself Steve Nelson, but whose real name is Steve Mesarosh. Nelson is one of the biggest shots in the United States Communist Party. He spent fourteen months in a Moscow school for training saboteurs. During the Spanish Civil War he was a colonel in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. When I worked with him in Pittsburgh, he was a member of the Red Army Reserve and was on call for military activity anywhere in the world. Until 1945 he was head of the party's Pacific Coast atomic-spy group.

After I gave my testimony in Washington, someone asked Nelson to comment upon it. "In the past, industries have financed stool pigeons," he said,

"but now companies don't have to hire them any more. They are subsidized by the Government." It was natural that Nelson should be bitter about me. During my last years as a party member I'd been his lieutenant and right-hand man.

Another comrade with whom I had worked was William Albertson, the Pittsburgh district secretary of the Communist Party. Albertson said, "When I read the story about Cvetic, I got the kind of feeling you get when you see a dead rat. . . . He makes me think of Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold."

Once the party knew that I'd never been a communist at all, the New York Daily Worker sent reporters to Pittsburgh to search the court records for smear material to discredit me. All that they dug up was the fact that my ex-wife's sister had once charged me with assault and battery. The trouble with my sister-in-law had grown out of a family squabble. As many a husband has felt before, in the heat of a judgment-blurring argument—and it seems now that my judgment must have been blurred in her case—I thought that one of my in-laws was trying to interfere with my home life. I pushed her and she fell down. She put out her hand to support herself and the fall broke her wrist. I was arrested, and paid \$340 to cover her doctor's bill. The charge against me was not pressed by the prosecutor. But the Daily Worker jumped on that family ruckus gloatingly. By leaving out the words "and battery," they made it sound as if I'd been charged with criminal assault. The Worker had no way of knowing that several weeks after they'd exaggerated the incident beyond recognition, my sister-in-law would write to one of my sons to commend me for the job I did for the FBI.

Thinking that if he could see the evidence given at my divorce trial, he could find something to use against me, a Daily Worker correspondent visited the Pittsburgh Common Pleas Court record office. That Daily Worker hatchet man drew a blank, for the judge had impounded the record.

Once word got around in party circles that I was planning to tell my story to the readers of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, each member of the staff of that magazine got a smear sheet from the office of the Pittsburgh Daily Worker. On the sheet was printed: MATT CVETIC FBI STOOL PIGEON AND LABOR SPY. One of the nicer names it applied to me was "coward."

I don't want to give the Daily Worker the satisfaction of answering their smear, but this much I



Steve Nelson, Cvetic's superior in the Communist Party, had 14 months in a Moscow sabotage school.



will say: This year, when I'd stopped working for the FBI, I was a guest at a meeting of the Westinghouse Local of the CIO International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. I was introduced by Jack Leahy, a former FBI special agent. He said that one of his duties had been to wire communist meeting places for sound, to pick up leads that would help the FBI in obtaining evidence. He went on to say that I'd given him a hand in wiring the Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh when the 1944 American Slav Congress convention was held in that building. He mentioned the \$7000 salary and the \$12,000 insurance policy that a regular FBI agent gets, plus protection from every other FBI agent in the country. Then he added, "While I was doing my job for a good salary, Matt Cvetic was doing a job few special agents of the FBI would have cared to do, and was getting peanuts for doing it. Matt Cvetic didn't have the kind of protection that was given to us. He not only had to forgo his personal life and lose his identity, he had to accept risks."

I must admit it made me feel good. I wouldn't have been human if it hadn't.

Despite the rigors of my undercover work, I am still able to laugh at some phases of it, particularly when I remember how the FBI arranged for the Pittsburgh communists to spy on themselves. The local Stalinists held many of their meetings on the second floor of a building at 943 Liberty Avenue. The lights on that floor were controlled by a main switch, and anyone who used the hall after dark had to throw that switch if he wanted to see. What the commies didn't know was that the FBI had wired the hall with a recording device that was connected with that switch. When the commies pulled it, they were making sure that everything they said was recorded. The FBI could pick up the recordings at its leisure.

Some of the things I had to say with a straight face during those years amuse me now. Even after I thought I was solid with the commies, I had to watch out for traps they set to discover whether I was as sincere as I cracked myself up to be. One day I got a letter from an important out-of-town party member. "I am sending you a suitcase," it said. "It contains highly confidential papers and literature. I'm trusting you to deliver it to me at my hotel." When the suitcase arrived, it was fastened with a rope tied in intricate knots. I called the Pittsburgh office of the FBI to ask if they wanted me to go



Dave Grant (in striped suit, tussling with photographers at a Red meeting in Pittsburgh) once warned Matt Cvetic that there was a stool pigeon in Cvetic's communist cell—which Cvetic knew only too well.



Party Leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn spoke at the meeting where Cvetic formally joined the Reds.

through it. "Don't touch it," they said. "It might be a plant to test you."

When I delivered the bag to the visiting comrade, he studied it carefully. Evidently there was something about the way that rope had been knotted that told him that it hadn't been opened. Up to that time he hadn't been able to wait to get his hands on it, but once he saw it he paid no more attention to it.

Before we settled down for a talk, he put his room telephone on the floor, covered it with his overcoat and, going into the bathroom, studied its tiled walls for signs that it had been wired. He gave the clothes closet the same going-over. Next he turned on the radio full blast, so that if any FBI agent was listening in he'd get a mush of roaring sound. "We've been taught to do it this way in Washington," he said. "That place is crawling with FBI lice."

The room wasn't actually wired, but I was all ears myself, and I had to make my face extra deadpan when I told him, "You never know who's hearing you here in Pittsburgh either."

If I hadn't hung onto a sense of humor—and I only began to lose it in the last year or two of my undercover work—I'd probably have been a mental case. For instance, I had a lot of fun with a prize I won for selling subscriptions to the Daily Worker. As a freshman in the party, it was one of my duties to peddle those subs. I sold more than anybody else in Pittsburgh and was given an award for my efforts—a collection of the best stories that had been printed in the Daily Worker in the previous ten years. I persuaded all of the leading communists in Pittsburgh to autograph it. Then I turned it over to the FBI for its file of signatures of subversives.

Sometimes it was hard for me to make up my mind as to whether certain situations were amusing or frightening. One day Dave Grant, who preceded Albertson as secretary of the Pittsburgh communist organization, wrote a sentence on a piece of paper and handed it to me. We were in the office of the Communist Party, but, like many other communists, Grant had an ever-present fear of concealed voice-recording devices, and when he had something to say that he thought was especially hot, he wrote it. What he'd written for me was "There's a stool pigeon in your cell." The cell he referred to was one in the Lawrenceville section of Pittsburgh. I had not only organized it, I was its chairman; so, when I read his message, my heart pounded. For, after all, there was a stool pigeon in my cell. I was it.

Behind Grant's warning was the fact that a Protestant minister was trying to frighten a former member of his flock into giving up communism and coming back into the fold. The minister had told the backslider he'd seen a thick file that the FBI was keeping on his communist activities and that the G-men were getting their information from a stool pigeon. I was one of the committee of three appointed to sweat the pigeon's name out of our comrade who was being given the minister's scare treatment. We took him into a back room, stood over him and said, "If you know who the stool pigeon is, it's your duty to tell us, no matter who gets hurt." He said, "I don't know his name. All I know is I've been told that we've got a lot of pigeons with us, and they're not among the small fry either. Some of them are among our higher-ups and, since the FBI knows all about me, I want out."

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## I POSED AS A COMMUNIST FOR THE FBI

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After sweating him for a week and making sure that he didn't know that I was a pigeon myself, I got bolder and really put the heat on him. The two other commies who were working on him thought that my zeal was admirable, and in the end I was given the job of visiting him once a week to pump information out of him and to try to talk him back into the party.

That wasn't the only time when commie talk about FBI snoopers gave me a queer feeling. For two or three years after I began to work for the FBI I lived at home. Then my wife and I separated, and I rented a room with a family in a Pittsburgh suburb, Crafton Heights. This arrangement wasn't very satisfactory. Too many of those who lived in that home asked sarcastic questions about my political inclinations and were nosy about the communists who visited me there. There was also sharp talk about the Red literature found in my room when it was being cleaned. So my life there was unpleasant and I began to think of taking a room in a hotel. I thought, *A hotel with several hundred rooms in it is like a little city in which a man can lose himself. People are always going in and out of a hotel, whether they live there or not, and if a party member sees me there, I can say that I'm there on business or visiting a friend.* I talked my hotel idea over with the FBI and they agreed that I should carry it out. For one thing, my FBI contacts could drop in on me there with less chance of being noticed than if they came to my rooms in a private home. At a hotel they could be going to see any one of hundreds of people. I made a deal with the hotel to pay for my room on a monthly basis, which kept the cost down to where I could afford it.

I'd been living on the third floor of that hotel for some time when one day I started to go downstairs. Who should I run into in the hall but Steve Nelson. "What are you doing, Matty, tailing me for the FBI?" he asked. There seemed to be an undertone of seriousness behind his question, so I pinned a smile on my face and said, "Yes, Steve, I'm really J. Edgar Hoover." Then I explained that, as he already knew, one of my sidelines was selling a little insurance here and there, and that there was an insurance convention going on in the hotel. Fortunately for me, there was.

I must have quieted any suspicion in Nelson's mind, for the day before I quit the FBI he asked me to help him plan the policy for a new party-front newspaper. However, since the party thought that I was still living in a rented room in a private home in Crafton Heights, the incident shook me badly. I'd persuaded my commie associates not to try to telephone me at the Crafton Heights address or come to see me there by telling them, "The people who take my phone calls and open the door for my visitors are violently anticommunist, and will run to the FBI with their tales as quick as a wink." The party members who'd been there to see me before I moved knew that was true, so that story seemed reasonable enough. However, after my hotel encounter with Nelson, I made a habit of changing my room frequently. It wouldn't do for a party worker with a mythical Crafton Heights address to

be bumping into visiting comrades in the hotel's halls or elevators with any regularity.

The communist anthem, the International, gave me some inner amusement whenever the comrades chanted it. I'd look around and see a bunch of fat-bellied comrades chanting its first line: "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation." The next line was "Arise, ye wretched of the earth," and some of those who were bellowing that were driving \$2500 automobiles. At first, I knew only a few lines of the song and had to fake the rest of it, but when I told the FBI that my bad memory was embarrassing me, they gave me a copy of the words, so I could learn it all. They grinned and said, "Don't take it so much to heart, Matt. After all, a lot of people don't know all of The Star-Spangled Banner either."

Another thing that makes me chuckle now, although it didn't seem funny at the time, occurred when an out-of-town communist came to Pittsburgh. The FBI had told me to lure him out of his hotel long enough for them to sift his luggage and wire his room to record any conversations he might hold with his fellow Reds. Outward-bound with him through the lobby, I signaled the FBI agent waiting there that it was O.K. to go to work. An hour later, when I came back with my commie companion, I looked for the "all-clear-upstairs" signal. If I didn't get it, I was supposed to think up an excuse to keep my comrade away until the job was finished. I was given the all-clear signal all right, but the agent who gave it to me wasn't very subtle about it. I guess I must have been a little tense, for to me he looked like a football referee wigwagging to a stadiumful of people.

"Who's that?" my commie friend asked.

"Just a punk I used to know," I said hurriedly. "He's always putting the touch on me. Let's beat it upstairs before he gets into me for a loan."

As I look back, the work I did seems dotted with ironic contradictions. I was one of those the FBI had lined up to prove the charges against the eleven communist leaders who were tried last year in New York in the trial presided over by Judge Harold R. Medina. At the time, I was also in charge of a committee engaged in raising funds for the defense of those same eleven comrades.

But certainly there wasn't anything funny about having my family think me a jerk and a traitor. That was the biggest price I paid for the work I did. My dad would ask, "Why are you so interested in spreading the rotten political ideas of Europe in this country when your mom and I left there because it's better here?"

My reply to that was, "I don't ask you why you do what you do, do I?" It would make him so furious that he'd order me out of his house. Then, when he'd cooled off, he'd ask one of my brothers to call me and tell me it was O.K. to come back again.

My father and mother came to this country fifty years ago from Vinice, a village in Slovenia in what is now Yugoslavia. When my father landed he worked as a molder in a Pittsburgh foundry, saved his pennies and bought a home. Later he went into business for himself as a café owner. I was born in 1909 in Pittsburgh. When I finished at St. Mary's grade school, I went to St. Vincent College prep school and finished a secretarial course. My first job was with a farm-supply-and-implement firm. After that I worked for a furniture company and sold radios in Pittsburgh. For a while I helped the

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Department of Justice make a crime survey. I studied 10,000 case histories of present and past inmates of the Western Penitentiary, then collated my findings. If my communist pals had ever found out that I'd worked for the Department of Justice, they wouldn't have let me become one of them. But they never did find out.

I have six brothers and four sisters, and when I began to talk about how the Soviet way of life is better than ours, they got antagonistic toward me. They said that I was bringing shame down on the family and that I wasn't welcome in their homes any more. My mother wasn't that nasty, but last year, only two weeks before she died, she begged me to change my name, so I wouldn't humiliate the other Cvetics.

I couldn't tell her about my real job. She wouldn't have knowingly hurt me, but if I'd given her the lowdown and one of my commie pals checking on my loyalty to the party had called her up and had pretended to be calling for the FBI, she might have given me away without meaning to. There was also another thing. She was never much of a poker face and her attitude toward me would have changed so noticeably that any commie counterspy couldn't have helped noticing it and wondering why.

Having my family and my former friends hold their noses as if they smelled something spoiled when I was around wasn't easy to take, but it was my best insurance against my communist associates' suspecting me of being a double-dealer. Even when my mother died, I thought it best to keep up my act at her funeral. One of my brothers told me, "When we get to the funeral parlor, we don't want any of that communist propaganda of yours. Just sit there and keep your mouth shut, and I hope none of your Red playmates come around." As it turned out, some of them did show up, and I sat in one of the anterooms of the undertaking establishment, talking to them. When the friends of the family passed by, most of them pretended not to see me.

If it had got around that I was still a Catholic, my sincerity as a communist would have been suspect. So, for the benefit of the party members who sat with me at my mother's funeral, I beefed about there being too much praying, and I said, "I'll be glad when all this sanctimonious stuff is over." As a result, two of my brothers wanted to take me outside and beat my brains out, but my oldest brother, who was calmer, talked them out of it. Some of the rank-and-file communists go to church and nothing is said about it, but if a communist leader takes his churchgoing seriously, that's different. Communism is based on dialectic materialism. I never got it straight in my mind exactly what that is, but I know it's atheistic. At the start of my undercover work, I'd taken a priest, the Rev. D. A. Lawless, of St. Mary of Mercy Church, into my confidence. I'd explained to him why I had to have a special dispensation to give up attending Mass and receiving the sacraments. He never violated my confidence and became one of my best friends.

Although my marriage was never a happy one, the twin sons we had were a pride to both my wife and me. They're eighteen now. One of them is in the United States Navy. The other is studying music at Duquesne University. When they were younger I spent so many evenings away from home at

party meetings and communist-front gatherings that it didn't sit so well with their mother, and when they heard the family wrangling that resulted from my absences, one of them, thinking he would make me feel better, said quite seriously, "Dad, when I grow up I want to be a bum like you."

Once, when they were ten, I telephoned home, and one of the twins answered by saying, "This is the FBI." In the split second that elapsed before I recognized his voice, my insides tightened like a closing fist. Then I asked, "For heaven's sake, what are you trying to pull?"

"I've been listening to a radio program about the FBI," he told me. "How's about buying me a G-Man set, dad? Chemicals and a fingerprinting outfit and like that." I bought one that night and took it home to him.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## IN THE HAYLOFT

By Herbert Merrill

What's this rolled up in a wisp of straw?

The tiniest mouse I ever saw,  
Curled up tight and pink as a rose,

With pin-point eyes and pinhead nose,

Spanking new and shiny clean  
And just the size of a jelly bean.

But what to do with a baby mouse?

Mice aren't welcome in the house,  
And in the barn the tomcats stalk,

And in the field the swinging hawk.

Rats would relish such a soft morsel left in their hayloft.

Would that I'd never found the bare

Helpless creature curled up there.

One finger snap would snuff him out

Against my thumb and end this doubt,

And yet . . . how rare a pinch of life—

I'll pocket him and ask my wife.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When the twins grew older, they no longer wanted to be a bum like me, and began to ride me for being a commie. "Why don't you give it up, dad?" they asked. On Sundays they'd want to know, "Did you go to Mass today?" and before I could answer, they'd give me a sarcastic "Ha-ha-ha" because they knew I hadn't gone.

In 1939 I'd filled out an application to enter the United States Army Intelligence and had been rejected. I still don't know why I was turned down. My guess is that it was for physical reasons. Certainly I'm not athletic, and perhaps I was too short. But somebody in Washington must have seen my application and have been impressed by it, for in April, 1941, two FBI agents visited me. Failing to get into Army Intelligence, I'd taken a job as interviewer with the United States Employment Service in Pittsburgh. The FBI men explained that because of that job I could do the country a service. If I agreed to help, my first assignment would be to get acquainted

with the communists who were infiltrating our war plants. The FBI agents told me that if I could talk like a commie and act like a commie, and do those things convincingly, I might be asked to join the party. But I was told that until I was taken into the party my FBI job would have to be on a voluntary, no-pay basis. I told them that I'd help in spite of that—after all, I was already being paid by the USES—so, during the first twenty-two months I worked for the FBI, it paid me nothing.

Before I was invited to join the Communist Party I had to sell its Pittsburgh leaders on the fact that I was good commie material. I became an outspoken Soviet sympathizer and sounded off about my Soviet leanings at every opportunity. Before long I was asked to attend communist and party-front rallies. Next I was asked to attend Marxist-Leninist schools, where I met a number of members of the Young Communist League and sang the songs then popular in Red circles. During the period before Germany attacked Russia the themes of the favorite party songs were: "The Yanks Are Not Coming" and "Do You Want Your Boys Sent Overseas to be Slaughtered?" I talked about refusing to "buy War Bonds to support a capitalists' war." I carried the Daily Worker and I made sure that the right people saw me carrying it. I bought all the other commie literature I could lay hands on. When I finished with it, I sent it to the FBI.

While I was being cased as a party prospect—and through all the years that followed—the communists put me through periodic questioning sessions. They weren't supposed to look like questioning sessions, but it wasn't hard to figure that's what they were. While such grillings were going on, I was asked various personal questions, such as: "Were you ever in jail?" and "If so, why?" The purpose of such querying was to suck up information that would be useful in smearing me if I ever got out of line.

I put to work promptly the men that the party heads sent to the USES and without asking any embarrassing questions. In all, I must have placed fifty or sixty of them. I even referred men and women who I knew were commies to the Civil Service Commission for work on what was afterward revealed to be the Manhattan Engineer Project, but whether they ever actually worked at atomic jobs or not I don't know. That wasn't my responsibility. As I sent each of them to work, I reported it to the FBI, and it was up to the FBI to decide whether they would be useful as stalking horses.

The communists in Pittsburgh took their time in asking me to join the party; so much so that I began to think that I must have slipped up somewhere. But my FBI advisers warned me not to seem too eager. "Maybe they want to see whether you're over-anxious," they said. And having been told to play hard to get, I did. It worked fine. Instead of being hesitant about me, the party's recruiting agents began to give me intensive sales talks. The first few times that I was asked to join, I stalled. "I can do you more good by placing party workers in key war industries," I said, "and if it begins to get around that I'm really one of you, that'll be tougher to do." Then I went on, "I think it would be smart if you'd tell your little pal to stay away from me, and not be so chummy around the office." The "little pal" I meant,

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had a job similar to mine at the Employment Service. Later I charged him under oath of being a party member, and, as far as I know, he has never denied my charge.

I could put a lot of conviction into this excuse, for things were getting rugged for me at the United States Employment Service. Before I'd started in on my fellow-traveler campaign, my co-workers in the office had been friendly and I'd been invited to their parties, picnics and other social functions. But once I began to make noises like a Red sympathizer, my former friends gave me the icy-glare treatment. Some of them said to me, "Matt, why do you let yourself get mixed up with a lot of commies?"

"You have your political beliefs and I have mine," I told them. Then I'd add piously, "Thank God we're still living in a free country!"

Finally, when my communist play-acting routine was too much for him to take, Patrick T. Fagan, the head of the Pittsburgh USES—he is now a Pittsburgh councilman—called me into his office and gave me a tongue-whipping. When he ran out of breath, he sent me to the office of another Employment Service boss, S. Chapman Wright. Chappie told me bluntly that the USES wanted no part of me.

"You can't fire me," I said. "I've got Civil Service status." The way he looked at me I thought I'd better get out of his office before he threw me out.

For the next few days I came in every morning, sat outside his office and read a paper. I wasn't going to give them a chance to say that I'd quit. Nobody said "Hello." I just sat there and read. After a week of seeing me there, they realized that it would take more than a cold shoulder to get rid of me, so they let me go back to work.

Gradually I let the Pittsburgh Communist Party recruiters wear me down. Finally I agreed to attend a recruiting meeting at the Fifth Avenue High School. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, a member of the national board of the Communist Party, was the principal speaker. When she finished, one of the comrades who'd been after me to join the party said to me, "We're putting on a recruiting drive. We've got a quota to meet, and if you sign, it'll put us over the top." I filled out an application for membership in the Communist Party and was told that

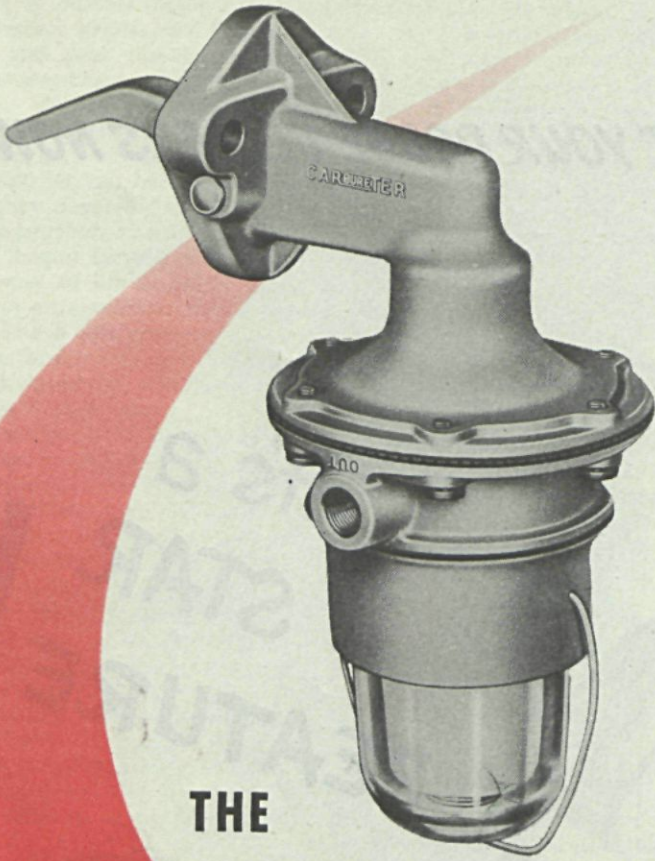
my party card would be issued a week or so later. Nowadays, for security reasons, new members join the party by word of mouth, and the use of application blanks and membership cards has been abandoned.

After the meeting I holed up in a drugstore-pay-phone booth, called the FBI, got hold of the agent who was my contact and told him that I'd made the grade. It was then that I was put on the FBI payroll. I couldn't have strained it much, for in the beginning my pay was more a token payment than a wage. Taking into consideration the fact that I was already being paid for one Government job, the FBI started me at fifteen dollars a week plus expenses. My FBI pay came from Washington to the Pittsburgh branch office of the FBI in the form of vouchers. Those vouchers were cashed and the money was delivered to me in person by FBI agents.

The first time my job scared me badly was the day I attended my first party meeting. The gathering was being held at the home of the editor of one of the party-controlled foreign-language newspapers. The nearer I got to his house the more nervous I became. I began to wonder if somebody had discovered that I was an FBI undercover man, and if I had been found out, what would happen to me when I got there. My walk slowed to a crawl. I remember that the sky was overcast and that the wind blew in stiff gusts.

Half a block away I was so nervous that I told myself, *You'd better light a cigarette. If you go in there with your hands jerky and your eyes frightened, you'll give yourself away.* Thinking it would calm me, I got out a deck of smokes and stuck one into my mouth. But my hands shook so that I had difficulty digging a book of matches out of my pocket, and I left the flap that covered the matches open while I struck one, a thing I'd never done before in my life. The next thing I knew, a puff of wind had licked the flame from the match over all the other matches and my hand was wrapped in fire. In a few seconds my fingers were puffy with white blisters. But the pain quieted my nerves like a triple shot of sedative. And it's a good thing I got over being nervous, because that first meeting was something I'll remember for a long time.

Editors' Note—This is the first of three articles by Mr. Cvetic and Mr. Martin. The second will appear next week.



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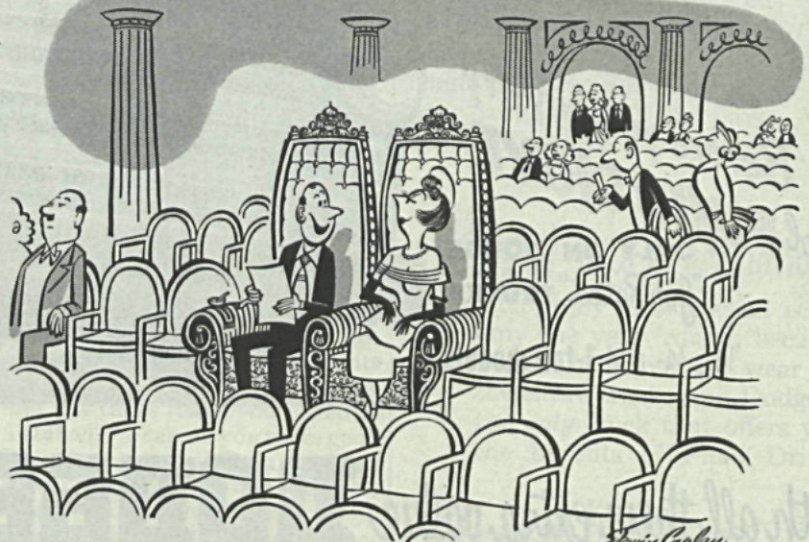
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